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#4, September

VANTAGE™

Information for the Serious Comic Book Investor

IMAGE™ CUTS

IMAGE PULLS BACK!

WHY?

WE PICKED IT, IT WENT UP!

BLOODSHOT #6!
SHADOWMAN#16!
KNIGHTFALL #11!

GREAT READING PICKS TOO!

- **NEW HIDDEN COMICS' GREATEST WORLD™ PICKS!**
- **THE LATEST ON ULTRAVERSE™!**
- **CONTINUITY™ MAKES THE VANTAGE PICK LIST!**

2 BIG VALIANT PICKS

VANTAGE PICK: SANDMAN #54!

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Here's how to win: Just send us an investing or reading tip, or just let us know what you did to promote Vantage. Your tip can be a hidden fact in comics, or even just your opinions on the investment market based on what you've seen at shows and in stores. Send us a copy of your own home-made reference tool, like an Image Index or Valiant character guide. Anything about comics can help us! Be sure to tell us where you got any info from (a photocopy is best, but not necessary)! If we haven't already thought of it (aww, what the heck, maybe even if we have already thought of it), we'll print your name, city, and state! You will be an official VANTAGE TIPMEISTER! Then we'll mail your GIANT NOTHING straight to you (hope your home is big enough)! Store owners can win a VANTAGE GIANT NOTHING for their store (plus 10 free copies of our latest issue for resale, our little way of showing you that you can always sell more Vantages!— proof of store ownership required)!

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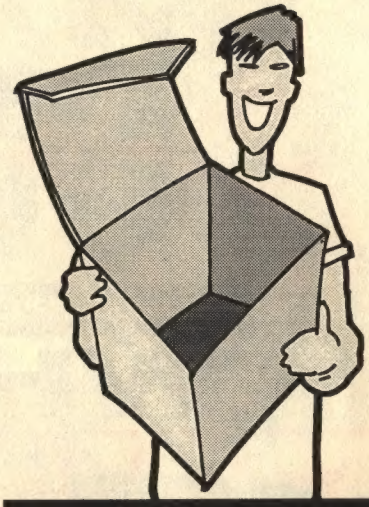

WIN MORE NOTHING!

We'll make no bones about it. If you're connected to industry gossip we want to talk to you. Call our office and mention this article. If you have any information that might be useful to fellow readers, let us know. Vantage is also still looking for dealer and retailer advisors. Give us a call or write us a note.

Publisher, Rob Golub. Editor, Tracy Willems. Admin Assist, John Green. Art Director, Steve Reid. Special thanks to our advisors.
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REPORT FROM CHICAGO COMICON

Wow! The giant Chicago Comicon was a blast! We met so many of you — what a pleasure. We hope to be at a show in your area soon! Our favorite part was when one fan pointed at our table, turned to friend with a wry smile, and said "This is how I got you that **Knightfall** #11!" What a satisfaction it is to see that the average collector can fill those important holes in his collection (without having to spend a fortune) thanks to Vantage!

Hey, wait until you see NEXT issue! For just a few dimes more, Vantage will be comic-sized with more information and graphics than ever! Plus, it will be our big **Vantage** #0 issue with a **Jim Shooter** interview and more great picks!

Whew! Another issue written and out! Ahhh . . . now we can sit back and relax with a comic . . . now where did we put that cool-looking X-O?

Top Picks of the Month

- **Rai Trade Paperback**
- **Catalyst** (Week 4 of Golden City)
- **Vortex** (Week 4 (?) of Vortex)
- **Turok** #4

More Vantage Investment Picks

- **Ultraverse** #1's, 2's, 3's
- **Barb Wire** (Week 1 of Steel Harbor)
- **X** (Week 1 of Arcadia)
- **Warriors of Plasm** #2
- **Sandman** #54
- **Armor** #4
- **Solar** #28-29

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions - keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. "Hot" comics can lose value after months or years. You would be wise to trade or sell books before they lose value. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own investment decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) Comics may be fun to invest in, but they're even more fun to read! Open up one of those sealed polybags and give comics a try!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

VALIANT:

ANDAR, RAI, AND MORE!

Batman and Robin. Peanut butter and Jelly. Jack and Jill. Starsky and Hutch. Turok and Andar. Get the idea? Andar hangs out with Turok.

At least in the old Gold Key **Turok** comics he did, and now he's back. Good old Andar makes his first Valiant appearance in **Turok** #4. In fact, we get two Andars in this book. **Turok** #4, yes, features the original Andar who is now in his eighties and sickly. In addition, this issue introduces Andar's grandson, also named Andar. This Andar kid is immature, inexperienced, and needs to get his act together. If anyone can shape up young Andar, Turok can. That's exactly what Grandpa Andar coaxes Turok to do. Thus, young Andar becomes a major new character in the Valiant Universe.

TM & © 1993 Voyager Communications

"Thus, young Andar becomes a major new character in the Valiant Universe."

It all happens in **Turok** #4, a book with a decent print run (we estimate 300,000) that many will overlook. Turok #4 is a nice read as well. It is still be available in some parts of the nation at cover price.

The big mags finally got around to reporting on the **Solar** miniseries that we've been telling you about for months. It will be called **Solar: The Destroyer.** It will involve spider-aliens and the Solar that split off and went into space in **Solar** #23. He will battle a big and evil spider-god who will be a very, VERY nasty guy. As we mentioned previously, look for price gains on #23. **Solar** #28-29 will lead into the mini by following the adventures of the Destroyer (the Solar that went into space). **Solar** #29 is also scheduled as the first of a series of Valiant books to come with special 3D glasses that will work on anything. That is, you won't see those funny red and blue lines that they normally use for 3D on #29. It will just look 3D when you use the glasses. **Vantage** has worn these strange glasses and things really do look pretty 3D. We get a little dizzy, but we still think it's a neat idea.

We've noticed that **Archer and Armstrong/Eternal Warrior** #8 (with a flip cover) has been slow to rise in spite of our announcement that Ivar (who first appears in #8) will get his own book. The Malevs want Ivar's secret of time travel for their own evil purposes. Rai and the Future Force will have to fight to keep Ivar's awesome power out of their grubby little hands. This storyline will push Ivar to the forefront of the Valiant universe, bringing us **Timewalker** #1, starring Ivar. **Vantage** expects #8 to gain some more value.

Bloodshot #6-7 is a hit, as we predicted. However, #6-7 may explode into something even bigger. Even at **Bloodshot** #6's current steep price tag, Vantage won't be surprised to see it go

even higher. Why? Two reasons: 1) Ninjak sounds like fun. This is something Valiant could not have done in the beginning because it would have seemed too regular. Now that Valiant is perceived as a special company, they can get away with their own version of a common, but popular theme. 2) Joe Quesada, the awesome artist on X-O Manowar #0, may be doing Ninjak as well. As we go to press Quesada is unconfirmed.

As for books coming out this month, our top Valiant pick is easy. It's the **Rai Trade Paperback**. This book reprints #0 as well as #1-4. At $11.95 it's a bargain. You'll always be able to get at least a few bucks for the paperback, but that's not where the real value is. The key here is that the paperback comes bagged with the Rai #0 Companion. Rai #0 reveals the history of the entire Valiant universe. However, the story is told by Geoff, so according to Valiant some of the story in #0 is exaggerated or mythic. The companion will take one of the many topics covered in **Rai** #0 and expand on it, correct it, and explain it. Since **Rai** #0 is so key to the Valiant universe, the companion will also be very important. **Every Valiant reader will want this book.** It should do nicely over the long haul.

Armorines will be a new title several months down the road. It will feature U.S. Marines who wear armor similar to Aric's, but not quite as powerful. The armor will be based on the technology of the X-O armor, which the government had spent some time with in a recent issue of X-O. It sounds like a neat concept. Keep your eyes peeled for the first appearance. Vantage expects that it will most likely sneak up on us.

Archer and Armstong sales have traditionally been low compared to other Valiant books. We suspect that the reason for this is the light and flippant nature of the book, which tends to hamper collectability. It seems that regardless of how great a read a comic is, the market is slow to respond to anything that's not in the serious superhero genre. Sources indicate that Mike Baron, the new writer (replacing Windsor-Smith who is doing Rune), plans to move the book in a more serious direction. The next few issues could wind up underordered in the face of a new readership demand.

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"Keep your eyes peeled for the first appearance. Vantage expects that it will most likely sneak up on us."

FOUR AWESOME CGW PICKS!

Dark Horse Comics' new Comics' Greatest World universe shows promise. X is cool. We find ourselves wanting more at the end of each issue! Dealers report that they are selling many single issues. This means people are buying these books to READ (gasp!) — a very good sign. An investment market must be supported by a devoted following of **readers** to grow and remain healthy. Plus keep in mind that it does not appear that any of the CGW books will have print runs above 300,000.

Sources at Dark Horse indicate that one character/team from each of the four major cities in CGW will get their own title. The four new titles will be **X, Catalyst, Barb Wire, and Vortex. If CGW takes off at all, the first appearances of these characters will be in serious demand.**

X: We already told you a couple months ago that X will get his own series, and that his first appearance was **Dark Horse Comics** #8 (Congrats to those of you who took our advice and picked it up. It sure is hot!) Sources indicate that **X will play a major role in the CGW universe.** Also important is **X** (Week 1 of Arcadia) which introduced the 16 week/one dollar series that Dark Horse is using to showcase its new universe. While this comic is not a first appearance, it will most likely be perceived by the marketplace as key.

Catalyst: Week four of Golden City apparently introduces Catalyst, a new super-group charged with the task of keeping Golden City the Utopia that it is. What's neat about this one is that we could get a whole bunch of first appearances out of it. **Catalyst** (Week 4 of Golden City) should still be available at cover price in some areas.

Barb Wire: Barb Wire is scheduled to receive her own title. **Barb Wire** (Week 1 of Steel Harbor) is her first appearance which should still be available at cover in some areas.

Vortex: The Vortex is the name of one of the four "cities" that CGW takes place in, but it will also be the name of a character. Since this character will star in his own series, his first appearance will have strong investment potential. It seems that his first appearance will take place in week four of the Vortex city series, but we suggest that you check. The book in the Vortex four week series that has the Vortex character's first appearance will have strong investment potential. The Vortex series is due out this month.

"The book in the Vortex four week series that has the Vortex character's first appearance will have strong investment potential."

Vortex TM & © 1993 Dark Horse Comics

ULTRAVERSE GETS SERIOUS!

Malibu. Now they're really getting serious. Barry Windsor-Smith (Archer and Armstrong, Eternal Warrior), one of comic-land's top artists, is now on board. He'll be penciling and co-writing a new Ultraverse series called Rune which will debut early in '94. Rune could help to bring Malibu into the small family of comic publishers whose books do gain serious back-issue value.

Before Rune #1 we'll see an 11-chapter story also called Rune. The action will unfold in three-page chapters found in the back of each Ultraverse title in October. This will be the first appearance of Windsor-Smith's artwork in the Ultraverse. Each of the 11 chapters will come with a Rune flip-cover and a coupon. Send all the coupons in and you get Rune #0. This will be a reprint of the 11 chapters along with . . . something. Ultraverse Editor-in-Chief Chris Ulm told Vantage, "We're still working on what extras we will put in, but I'm sure it's going to be a value comic fans won't want to miss."

More good news: Ultraverse print runs for books now in your local shop are very low. Apparently, store owners decided (understandably) to be very cautious when they placed their advance-orders for Ultraverse. The storylines seem to be even more fun than many had expected. While the first few #1's (Strangers, Hardcase, Prime) had healthy print runs of around 300,000 each, the subsequent issues of these books are coming in at around 100,000 or lower. This is pretty low. Even more exciting are the print runs on Freex and Mantra #1 which Vantage estimates to be around a low 150,000 each.

The caution of retailers works in our favor, especially since Ultraverse books have been quickly selling out, the storylines seem pretty good, and Windsor-Smith is now on board. Our hope is that a substantial number of the people who purchased the first issues of Strangers, Hardcase, and Prime are READERS who enjoyed these books as much as we did. Then, when there's only 50-100,000 of 2's and 3's, demand could seriously outstrip supply. So far, the signs are good. Stores are reporting that readership interest is pretty high. Many advisors say that they will be increasing their orders due to quick sell outs of the first few Ultraverse comics. Our only fears: 1) Both the investment and readership markets could become flooded with too many new titles from Ultraverse all at once. 2) Print runs could dip so low that the recent spark of interest goes out before it can burst into flames. The irony here is that Malibu's greatest challenge is now too many and too little all at once. Stay tuned.

"The caution of retailers works in our favor, especially since Ultraverse books have been quickly selling out, the storylines seem pretty good, and Windsor-Smith is now on board."

Ultraverse TM & © 1993 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

IMAGE CUTS BACK:

TRIBE AND TEARS ARE OUT!

Were you completely confused when you heard about the Image cutback? The big mags seemed unable to make any sense out of this one, and rumors have been flying at warp speed. That's because the press release was cryptic, and trying to get the real story out of Image has been like pulling teeth. This is what we came up with . .

Interest in Image has slowed in some areas, due to a glut of new Image titles. Thus, Image has decided to cut five ongoing series: **Tribe, Shamen's Tears, Stupid,** The **Maxx,** and **Trencher.** Each of the creators behind these titles have been told that they may publish under the Image banner until issue #5. Todd Johnson and Larry Stroman have decided to pull out from Image beginning with Tribe #2, which will be published under the banner of their new imprint: "Axis Comics". Johnson excitedly told **Vantage** that the Axis motto would be, "Take a new spin!" Image is also cracking down on all late mini-series. All minis must now be completed in a "timely manner" or they will be cut. **Gen-X,** and **Union** are examples of titles that will not be cut.

Image has had a real problem getting comics out on schedule. This has annoyed retailers to no end, who as a result wound up with not enough books to sell one week and then too many to sell the next week. **Pitt** #1 was supposed to kick off a monthly series, but **Pitt** #2 came out over six months later. Dealers commonly cut on Image with barbs like, "I didn't know **Pitt** was an annual."

Image took a brand name (Image) with tremendous customer loyalty and support behind it and they didn't provide the service necessary to maintain status quo. We at **Vantage** are amazed at this, since we work so hard to insure that "**Vantage**" is always associated with a first-rate product and top-notch service. We can't imagine doing business any other way.

Publisher Tony Lobito on the cuts: "We feel this is unfortunate, but we also believe this was our best option to assure the continued viability of Image in the face of the on-coming glut . . . [the creators who have been cut] added an element of variety to the Image line and contributed to Image's success, just as Image added to their future success, allowing many of them to capture their largest audiences ever." Image adds that they are making the cuts to return to their "superhero roots."

Image will now focus their efforts on six titles: **Spawn, Youngblood, Wild CATS, Shadowhawk, Cyber Force,** and **The Savage Dragon.** Image plans to take characters from each of these six titles and use them to spin off new titles.

One such spin-off is on the way from the one Image book that seems unscathed by Image's problems . . . **Spawn**. The Violator, who first appeared in **Spawn** #2, will star in his own mini. The mini will be by a real powerhouse team: **Alan Moore and Bart Sears!** This should build interest in the Violator's appearances in Spawn.

McFarlane is also introducing a line of toy/collectables. The first will be a **Hot**

"All minis must now be completed in a 'timely manner' or they will be cut."

IMAGE

Wheels™ Spawnmobile from Mattel™. They will limit production to 50,000 cars and the color of the car will be given special attention. **Vantage** is told that the car will go through a nineteen-step color process whereas a typical **Hot Wheels**™ car would go through only about five steps. We know nothing about **Hot Wheels**™, but apparently this is a good thing.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

CONTINUITY: **Deathwatch 2000** brought Continuity many new readers and much attention, but not the full attention of the investment market. Perhaps the Rise of Magic will help. The actual "Rise of Magic" crossover will not take place for months, but the magic leading up to the crossover begins now. Each title will slowly become "possessed" by Magic. As a title is drawn into magic it will feature "arcane-parchment" paper and a stone-textured, embossed demon across the top of the comic. This little guy will grow bigger and more intricate as we move along towards the actual "Rise of Magic" crossover.

By November, every title will be possessed by Magic and the crossover will begin. The first title to be possessed by Magic will be **Armor** #6, which will be out this month. We will learn in **Armor** that if the Rise of Magic is allowed to continue, science will vanish forever, leaving only those with magic in control of the world. (Cool concept!) Most store owners were not aware of the fact that Armor #6 would be the first magic book when they placed their orders. Its print run could turn out far lower than it should be. Other books introducing magic this month: **Crazyman** Vol. 2, #3, **Megalith** #6, **Ms. Mystic** Vol. 3, #3, **Samuree** Vol. 2, #3, **Valeria**, The **She-Bat** #5. Since Continuity will spend the next several months heavily promoting the Rise of Magic, these early issues all have investment potential. This is a ground-floor opportunity.

Ultraverse TM & © 1993 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

ULTRAVERSE: Malibu has been shipping some comics with "Wild Coupons" that can replace a missing coupon to complete the set you need to get **Ultraverse** #0 (Jim Lee cover!). Retailers were not aware of these "Wild Coupons" when they placed their orders.

SANDMAN: **Sandman** is great reading and if you haven't tried it you should, but that's besides the point. Stores were not aware of this when they placed their orders, but sources indicate that this month's **Sandman** #54 will feature a guest-appearance by Death. Previous appearances of Death have

VANTAGE QUICKIES

gained value nicely, and her recent fun-loving mini-series will most likely only help in this regard. New **Sandman** issues may be good investments in general as they come out, and #54 now only looks even better.

Sandman TM of DC Comics © 1993 .All rights reserved.

MARVEL: Lots of bits and pieces from Marvel this month. **Excalibur** is joining the **X-Men** continuity with issue #71. That is, it will fall under the editorial umbrella of Bob Harris who also handles **Uncanny X-Men, X-Men, Wolverine**, and **Cable**, thus making it an official X-Men continuity book. This title has traditionally been a dog, but this could bring it back from the dead.

West Coast Avengers #100 will feature the death of a major character. The West Coast team will essentially be fired by the Avengers and will be replaced by **"Force Works,"** a new title.

Some areas are reporting a real interest in the well-written Fall From Grace storyline (**Daredevil** #319-325). **Daredevil** #319, with a striking cover, could gain some value.

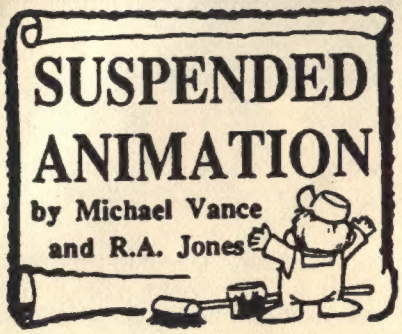
In **Wolverine** #75 events will take place that will cause Wolvie to lose all or some of his powers. Marvel tells us that he may have to be replaced by someone who is now a villain. The big X-Men/Avengers crossover that **Vantage** told you about kicks off this month with **Avengers** #368 and **X-Men** #26.

DEFIANT: We enjoyed Plasm #0 and are looking forward to the series. Starting with #1, the series name has been changed from **Plasm** to **Warriors of Plasm**. This is in response to threatened legal action from Marvel due to Marvel's ownership of a character called "Plasmer". Defiant tells us that **Warriors of Plasm** #2 will come with a "wild and bizzare" glowing green on the cover which is supposed to be the color of Plasm. The Good Guys is a three–page serial currently running through Previews. The Good Guys will eventually be a continuous title, and Defiant currently plans to eventually reprint the serial for everyone. Defiant has a strong policy to keep print runs from getting out of hand. Shooter: "What I don't like is when people [store owners] have to buy 100 ordinary comics to get the one that has the gold foil . . . it's going to blow up in everyone's face because people are going to start catching on."

Defiant Logo and artwork TM & © 1993 .Enlightened Entertainment

TOPPS: **Raptor** #1 . . . will it be another Aliens or Predator like at Dark Horse? Advisors report that Jurassic Park comics have been selling well.

CORRECTIONS: Last issue we told you that Daredevil #314 might lead into the "Fall From Grace" storyline. While our source was one that most would never doubt, this information may have been incorrect.



"Next, please. Names? 'Next Men'. Very Funny. Occupation?"

The old man behind the counter looked up. The kid wore a red and blue costume and what looked like boxer's head gear. "Super hero," he sighed. The line stretched on forever.

"Birthdate?" he asked. He wrote down genetically engineered. There were five: Brawn (very strong), Jasmine (agile), Scanner (supervision), Hardbody (indestructible), and Sprint (fast).

"So," he continued, "what makes you different from every other character in line?"

"Well," said Sprint, "We're more realistic. We act like people with personalities even though we have powers. And we have this thing called 'plot.' Lots of science fiction things and even a super villian hanging around in the wings. But we're not just pretty pictures. We tell stories."

I'll admit that's unusual for super heroes today," answered the old man. "But other heroes tell stories."

"Don't take my word for it. Ask the guy behind us," grinned Sprint, pointing to a frumpy character with a beard and his hands in his pockets. "He thinks we're one of the best teams around, and he doesn't even like super teams."

"He's a comics critic. What do they know?"

"Well, he says we use all of the cliches, but with enough twists to make us interesting. He says we look distinctive without looking artsy."

"True," grinned the old man. "Jasmine and Hardbody are . . . "

"And," interrupted Sprint, "he likes the way our stories unfold. Everything isn't spelled out: you get bits and pieces of information without seeing the whole picture."

"Things keep getting added too. Like now we've discovered another group of genetically engineered people in Russia. They were growing super soldiers while America was growing us."

"Okay," grumped the old man, "but, what's the point?"

"Don't know," answered the kid. "You'll find out when we do. Kinda neat, huh?"

"Believe me," interjected the critic, "they are kinda neat, if you like super hero stuff."

Next Men / $2.50, 24 Pages, Published by Dark Horse Comics. Art and words by John Byrne.

A growing number of people are discovering comics they'll enjoy reading. If you have a question or comments, or can't find a book reviewed, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: 1427 S. Delaware Ave, Tulsa OK 74104.

"He's a comics critic. What do they know?"

WE SAID IT, IT HAPPENED:

"Top Pick of the Month"
— **Vantage** on **Batman** #497 (Knightfall #11) before it came out!

"Top Pick of the Month"
— **Vantage** on the **Plasm Album** before the advance order deadline!

"Top Pick of the Month"
— **Vantage** on **Shadowman** #16 when it was still available at cover price!

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❑ Check here if you own or work at a comic shop.

*We reserve the right to change info or picks if new information comes in before we print Vantage. For changes other than small corrections and minor adjustments, we will keep you updated.